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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [AFGHANISTAN](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN ASSISTANCE: ITALIAN ENVOY SUGGESTS

U.S. PUSH FINI FOR MORE

REF: A) ROME 27 B) 05 STATE 226670 C) ROME 28

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor David D. Pearce, Reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary. Italian Special Envoy for Afghanistan Anna della Croce January 5 said Italy would deliver on assistance already pledged for Afghanistan but there was virtually no prospect of additional funds absent an unusual direct intervention by the FM. The January 24 visit to Washington by FM Gianfranco Fini could therefore be timely, coming just a week before the London Conference. On justice sector issues, Della Croce observed that Afghan President Karzai had not mentioned judicial reform in his recent speech to parliament so she hoped he would in his London remarks. End Summary.

2. (C) Pol M/C and Polmiloff called on della Croce to follow up Charge,s January 3 discussion of Italian assistance to Afghanistan (Ref A). Pol M/C noted that aid to Afghanistan was a strategic investment in regional stability and in our common interest. It was important for all donor nations to follow through on existing pledges and consider further contributions at the London Conference.

3. (C) Della Croce said military and economic assistance to Afghanistan remained a high priority for Italy. She felt this bilateral commitment would not change if the center-left won national elections in April. The Italian envoy said that, despite a 28 percent overall cut in Italy's FY 2006 foreign economic assistance budget (Ref C), Italy would follow through on its Berlin pledge of 145 million euros over three years through 2006. But, given this budget situation, absent an unusual direct intervention by the FM it was virtually certain that Italy would not be in a position to pledge any additional funds for FY 2006 at the upcoming Afghanistan Compact conference.

4. (C) Della Croce suggested that the FM's January 24 visit to Washington was therefore timely, coming just a week before the London meeting. She herself supported an additional contribution, but assistance funds were very limited. Further, she explained, Fini, as DPM, sees himself as above the inter-ministerial fray over money; consequently, the MFA lacks a first-string advocate with MinFin Giulio Tremonti in the interagency scramble for money. Della Croce said the MFA's briefing papers for Fini's visit would stress the importance of Afghanistan. Pol M/C said this was certainly the case; the US intended to send a high-level delegation to the meeting and was sure to make a substantial contribution itself. Della Croce cautioned that Fini could still duck behind the budget numbers, but in her view only high-level USG intervention could shake any additional Italian money loose.

5. (C) Italy will continue its commitment to Afghan justice sector reconstruction in the post-Bonn era, della Croce said. Della Croce expressed regret at Afghan President Hamid Karzai's relative public silence on the subject. He did not mention judicial reform in his inaugural address, and it will be a negative signal if Karzai, in his London conference address, fails to speak out on the issue as he has in other areas, like counter-narcotics. Della Croce speculated that the president's silence on judicial reform may reflect political ties to some figures who might prefer not to see vigorous pursuit of such issues as transitional justice.

6. (C) Comment: Della Croce clearly feels that Fini sees himself much more as a deputy prime minister presiding over the government as a whole than as a minister who needs to lock horns with other ministers over resources. She wants to see more money for Afghanistan, but feels it won't be there without an outside push. End Comment.

SPOGLI